

Midwest floods are another wakeup call Capitalist gov't does little as climate disasters grow

By LeiLani Dowell

The floodwaters caused by extreme weather are receding in the upper Midwest, but they have left behind at least 24 people killed and 148 injured. As of June 24, some 35,000 had been displaced from their homes and lost all their possessions. Between southern Iowa and St. Louis, the water had topped or breached 31 levees along the Mississippi River. More flooding may still occur further downstream along the Mississippi.

Volunteers from the community, people returning to their homes and emergency workers face a toxic cocktail of manure, pesticides, mold and raw sewage in the waters surrounding them, not to mention swarms of mosquitoes. It is estimated that it will take days and even weeks for the floodwaters to totally recede.

The floods have resulted in record-high corn prices. About one quarter of the corn crop had already been diverted to the production of ethanol in the past two years. Corn is not only a staple found in many food products consumed throughout the world but is also the primary feed used for raising livestock. The prices of chicken, pork and beef are also expected to increase.

An estimated 4 million acres of prime farmland have been washed out by the floods, and analysts predict that the area may produce 15 percent less corn than last year. In what will probably turn out to be a stunning underestimate, the federal government predicts that food prices will rise by 5.5 percent this year.

As climate change threatens to increase the occurrence and severity of extreme weather events on the planet, the recent storms and flooding in the Midwest have shown how the lack of planning under capitalism can have exponentially devastating consequences.

Capitalist development leads to deadlier rivers

Even the most openly capitalist of all the newspapers, the Wall Street Journal, reports that a push for development which paved over wetlands and flood plains in the St. Louis area has increased the likeliness of huge floods there. "Since the historic flood of 1993, nearly 30,000 homes have been built on land that was underwater around the Mississippi and Missouri rivers near St. Louis," the Journal states. "By building along the riverbanks and forcing the Mississippi into a bed that is less than half the width of where it ran a century ago, residents are displacing water and forcing the river to run faster and higher." (June 19)

The increase in development along riverbanks has led, in turn, to an increase in the construction of levees. However, these same levees channel runoff water back into the river, raising the water level once again.

The results can be found in the record-breaking flood levels seen recently. During the big floods of 1993, the Mississippi River crested 12 feet higher than it did during the floods of 1903, even though the same amount of water washed down

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Free all Jersey 4
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WW in 1975

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OIL COMPANIES

Profit off Iraqi,
U.S. consumer misery

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4,5

OIL COMPANIES KICKED OUT OF IRAQ
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What’s really causing rising oil prices?

By Jaimeson Champion

As the skyrocketing cost of energy continues to rapidly erode the standard of living of billions of workers around the globe, a handful of transnational oil companies are being given hundreds of billions of dollars in no-bid oil contracts in Iraq.

Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Total, BP and Chevron are reportedly in the last stages of finalizing a deal to take over production in Iraq’s oil fields. The deal is expected to be officially announced on June 30.

The awarding of the no-bid contracts comes at a time when President George W. Bush is lobbying Congress to grant some of these same oil corporations the exclusive rights to oil exploration off the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of the United States.

The no-bid contracts in Iraq, and the attempt to hand to the oil giants exclusive drilling rights on the U.S. coasts, highlight the increasing monopolization of the world’s most coveted resource.

Recently, there has been no shortage of explanations for the meteoric and record-breaking ascent of the price of oil. But lost amidst all the talk of growing demand in China and speculation in the futures market is the fundamental contradiction of a natural resource that is essential to the daily lives of billions of people being owned and distributed by a small handful of private corporations.

Increasing monopolization of the oil industry has enabled oil giants like Exxon Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell to become price setters. The average cost per barrel of producing oil for a company like Exxon Mobil or Shell has remained around \$30, if not lower, since 2003. In the same time frame, the price of oil has gone from \$30 a barrel in 2003 to over \$140 a barrel today. That is the very definition of windfall profits.

The claim by the oil corporations that the price increase reflects the increased cost of oil exploration and drilling is an outright lie. Exxon Mobil spends more money per year on buybacks of its own shares than on oilfield exploration and investment.

Exxon Mobil raked in \$40.6 billion in profit last year. That figure ranks as the biggest profit margin in the history of capitalism. Royal Dutch Shell raked in more than \$30 billion. In the same year, ballooning energy and food

costs pushed billions of workers deeper into poverty, while 800 million people went hungry. Accumulation of great wealth at the top of the socio-economic ladder has directly caused misery and starvation at the bottom.

In bouts of demagoguery, U.S. ruling class politicians often blame foreign governments in OPEC for oil prices. But transnational oil corporations like Exxon Mobil produce more oil per year than almost all of the OPEC state enterprises, the only exceptions being Saudi Arabia and Iran.

And the state oil company in Saudi Arabia, Saudi Aramco, which owns the rights to the world’s largest proven reserves, has a board of directors that includes James Kinnear, former Texaco president and CEO; Mark Moody-Stuart, former chair of Royal Dutch Shell Group; and Peter Woicke, former vice president of the International Finance Corporation, a World Bank subsidiary.

Also, Western-based transnational oil corporations own and operate the vast majority of refineries needed to turn crude oil into fuel. This only heightens their monopolistic grip on production.

The fact is that the majority of the world’s oil is extracted, refined and sold by a small number of Western-based transnational oil corporations. These corporations are using their price-setting capabilities to gouge workers all over the globe. They want us busy pointing our fingers at Middle Eastern governments and unnamed speculators while they steal money from our pockets.

But while Exxon Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell may have raked in record-setting profits last year, their days of plenty are numbered. Across the globe, workers are joining together to fight back against the monopoly capitalists and their relentless price gouging. From striking truck drivers in the E.U. who have brought commerce to a halt, to street protesters in Southeast Asia who have shut down a number of cities, more and more workers are rising up in militant protest against sky-high fuel costs.

Increasing and intensifying these types of actions is the only hope of breaking the monopolists’ grip on oil. The shareholders of Exxon Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell should have no right to own this natural resource that millions of people need to heat their homes or drive to work. Private ownership of oil is as ridiculous as private ownership of the ocean. □

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Midwest floods expose need for planning

Continued from page 1

the river. During the floods this month, the Cedar River in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, crested 12 feet higher than the previous record in 1851. Record flooding has been reported this year at 12 locations on four Iowa rivers.

Many of those who lost their homes in the recent floods, instilled with a false sense of security due to nearby levees, did not have flood insurance. In Gulfport, Ill., a town that was completely flooded over in recent weeks, the Federal Emergency Management Agency had rated two levees as sufficient to withstand a 100-year flood (a flood that has a one in 100 chance of happening in any given year). As a result, only 28 of the 200 residents there had flood insurance.

The problem is compounded by a lack of comprehensive planning when it comes to the building and maintenance of the levees, which are controlled by a hodgepodge of federal, local, county and state officials, and even individual community members.

A recommendation by a committee of experts, after the 1993 floods, to put all levees under federal jurisdiction was never enacted. Some of the levees have not even been recorded by federal officials. This lack of coordination makes it

difficult to accurately predict where water levels will break over the levees.

Dr. Gerald G. Galloway, Jr., chairperson of the committee and a former brigadier general with the Army Corps of Engineers, told the New York Times that after Hurricane Katrina Congress passed a bill to inventory and inspect levees, but neglected to provide enough money to do so. (June 22)

Meanwhile, a lack of funding has forced the U.S. Geological Survey to discontinue hundreds of stream flow gauges across the country, making flood prediction increasingly difficult.

Profits over people in agricultural production

Even more lack of foresight can be seen in the profit pressures that have shaped capitalist agriculture in the region. The Washington Post reports, "Some Iowans who study the environment suspect that changes in the land, both recently and over the past century or so, have made Iowa's terrain not only highly profitable but highly vulnerable to flooding." (June 19)

Natural characteristics of the land that served to absorb water have often been replaced with little thought to the repercussions. Lands closer to creeks and riv-

ers have increasingly been farmed. Ninety percent of the wetlands have been lost, according to Mary Skopec, a water quality monitor for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. (Washington Post, June 19)

In addition, 106,000 acres of Iowa land have been taken out of the federal Conservation Reserve Program in the past two years. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, the program "encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as tame or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filter strips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract." (www.nrcs.usda.gov) The vegetative cover that the CRP encourages serves to absorb water.

The recent boom in the production of ethanol from corn for use as an additive to gasoline has led to an increase in cultivation of the crop, leading some farmers out of the CRP. Corn now covers a third of Iowa's land surface.

At least one politician, Sen. Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, has called on the Agriculture Department to release tens of thousands of farmers from their CRP con-

tracts in response to the recent floods—when it's apparent that the opposite, increasing the amount of conservation lands, would have a positive effect on flood threats in the future.

The White House has asked Congress for \$1.8 billion in emergency aid for the flood. Meanwhile, more than \$531 billion has been spent to date on the war in Iraq alone. (www.nationalpriorities.org) The recent war-funding bill passed by the House of Representatives calls for another \$162 billion for the war—and a paltry-by-comparison \$2.7 billion for emergency flood relief.

From protection of the environment to agricultural development and emergency response, a complete neglect of preventative measures has spelled destruction for the people of the Midwest and beyond and portends future chaos.

This lack of planning is an inherent characteristic of the capitalist system, which places the drive for profit above all other concerns, heedless of the destruction it causes. It will take the continuing people's struggle to see to it that survivors of natural disasters are taken care of. It will take a new social system to roll back the devastation created by the one we now live under.

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Book tour on Black freedom struggle

By Workers World
Los Angeles Bureau

Monica Moorehead, former Workers World Party presidential candidate and editor of the groundbreaking book, "Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle," spoke at forums and book signings from San Francisco to San Diego June 14-21. She is also a managing editor of WW newspaper.

Moorehead spoke about the coming period of struggle and the challenges necessary to build multinational, working-class solidarity in relation to the upcoming elections in talks titled, "Obama, Racism and Black-Brown Unity."

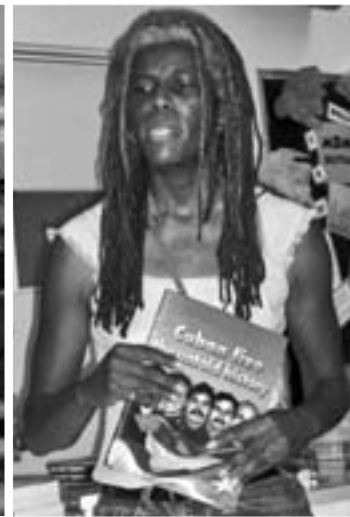
The writer and editor spoke eloquently about the need to both understand and be sensitive to the overwhelmingly positive reaction to the Obama bid for the presidency, especially among Black people here, but also to understand the contradictions presented by Obama's pro-imperialist perspective.

She talked about the historical significance of Obama's campaign within the overall struggle against racist Jim Crow laws that disenfranchised millions of Black people up until the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act as well as the right to self-determination.

"Our movement must stand ready and united to defend the Obama campaign from racist attacks, separate and apart from defending his status quo program. Defending Obama's right to run free of racist, right-wing attacks is part and parcel of the demand for reparations, since the right to full equality has been denied to Black people since the demise of Reconstruction," stated Moorehead.

This approach to discussing the challenges ahead resonated with the many who attended these book signings and forums.

In San Diego WWP member Carl Muhammad chaired the meeting at



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Left and above, Monica Moorehead speaks at meeting, book signing in Los Angeles; John Parker, second from right. Above, in San Diego, Gloria Verdieu holds Cuban Five pamphlet.

San Diego Community College on June 19. Gloria Verdieu of the Free Mumia Coalition and WWP spoke about the need to free political prisoners, naming Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier, the MOVE 9 and the Cuban Five, among others. Black spoken-word artist Sherehe read a moving poem called "Somos Una Gente." A Big Noise Film narrated by Abu-Jamal was shown on the Jena Six—Black youth being legally lynched in Jena, La., for

opposing racism.

In Los Angeles on June 20, Moorehead did a book signing at one of Inglewood's landmark bookstores—Zahra's, which features books from the progressive movement, particularly the Black liberation movement. The following day, at a full meeting at the Kaos Network office in over 90-degree heat, Moorehead's talk inspired enthusiastic questions and comments.

John Parker of the International Action

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

Racism, national oppression and self-determination by Larry Holmes

Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Causes of turmoil in Jamaica by Pat Chin

Black youth: repression & resistance by LeiLani Dowell

Black and Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice! by Saladin Muhammad

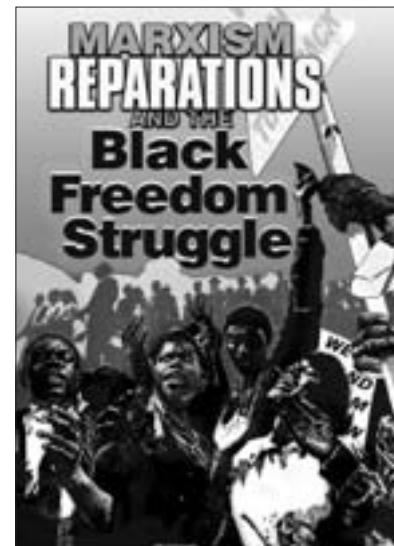
Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion by John Parker

Racism and poverty in the Delta by Larry Hales

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If you would like to help make sure that this book is widely distributed: call 212-627-2994 or email wwp@workers.org, online: www.workers.org. You can help promote the book or organize a book signing party.



GRAPHIC: SAHU BARRON

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Unions join against Aramark



WW PHOTO: ED CHILDS

Hundreds of food service workers rallied in front of the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center on June 23 as part of a three-day strike against Aramark Corp. The workers also picketed the Hynes Convention Center. The Aramark workers are members of Local 26 of UNITE/HERE but have been working without a contract since October. They struck June 21-23 and have called for a boycott of Aramark food services within the convention centers. They say that Aramark has harassed and intimidated union members and fired workers for union activity, including members of the negotiating committee. USW Local 8751 of the Boston School Bus Drivers’ Union, also fighting a contract battle, participated in the action in solidarity with the food service workers.

—Frank Neisser

Solidarity picnic for bus drivers



WW PHOTO: ED CHILDS

By Frank Neisser

After the successful action at the summer bid for job postings at the Washington Street yard June 21, Steelworkers Local 8751 held a solidarity rally and barbeque at the union hall in Roslindale, attended by hundreds of drivers, their families and community supporters.

City Councilor Charles Yancey led off the rally, thanking the union for being there through thick and thin, driving all his children to school throughout their school years. He called for a moment of silence for Rachel Nasca, a tireless union supporter who died suddenly a year ago, and for Hector Rivas, a union mechanic who was killed by the company’s neglect. Rivas suffocated to death due to carbon monoxide poisoning because the company refused to pay \$40 to repair a defective ventilator.

Steelworkers International Rep Joe

Carlson expressed the support and solidarity of the Steelworkers behind the union’s stance of “No contract, no work.” Rich Rogers, secretary-treasurer of the Greater Boston Labor Council, AFL-CIO, told the drivers that all Boston labor was with them and behind them and would stand fast with them on June 30. Tony Hernandez, an organizer in Painters and Allied Trades District Council 35, expressed the painters’ solidarity and support.

Ahmad Kawash of the Palestinian American Congress expressed unconditional support and called for workers’ solidarity around the globe, from Palestine to Roxbury. Sandra MacIntosh of Work for Quality thanked the union for its support of the struggle for quality and choice in education and declared herself the chairperson of FOBU—Friends of the Bus Drivers Union.

University of Massachusetts professor and co-chair of the Rosa Parks

Human Rights Day Committee Tony Van Der Meer expressed solidarity with the union and talked of the importance of having a contract in the wake of all the economic attacks coming down on the community. He linked this need directly to the bankers’ economic crisis and the costs of the Iraq war.

Solidarity messages were also given by the Community TV host of “The Emancipator,” by former driver Leo Edwards and by Padma Balasubramanian from the International Action Center. All the drivers expressed their militant determination by responding enthusiastically to the speakers. The supply of USW Task Force for Contract Justice T-shirts with the “Will strike if provoked” logos was gone in short order. In conversations over the plentiful food at the barbeque, the buzz was that the union was stronger and more united than ever. □

ON THE PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

22,500 Colorado state workers unionize

At least 22,500 secretaries, campus workers and other state employees in Colorado will soon be covered by a union contract following a vote tallied June 11. Some 5,481 out of the 6,900 workers who voted went for union representation. Contracts with three unions in ColoradoWINS (Service Employees, State, County and Municipal Employees and the Federation of Teachers) will cover 22,500 workers, or a third of all state employees. Colorado WINS is continuing to try to organize another 11,000 state workers who are eligible to unionize and bargain collectively for wages and work conditions under an executive order issued by Governor Bill Ritter last November. (Denver Post, June 13)

Unionists rally against high fuel prices

State and local affiliates of the AFL-CIO organized protests in Albuquerque, Denver, Louisville, Madison, Wisc., and St. Louis in early June to protest high fuel prices. A prominent slogan in all the street demonstrations and rallies was “Say NO to big oil.” As Manny Flores of Laborers Local 730 in Denver said, “This is ridiculous. Two months ago, I spent \$30 per week on gas for work. Now I have to pay over \$60 per week. You have a choice—fill the tank, or buy milk for the kids. If I have \$50, I spend \$20 for gas, and the rest for bread, eggs, and milk. With this economy, you can’t live on what you make.” (blog.aflcio.org)

Atlantic City casino workers demand contracts

Even though casino workers in Atlantic City voted for the Auto Workers to represent them at four casinos—Caesars, Trump, Tropicana and Bally’s—last November, management of the casinos have refused to negotiate. That’s why more than 3,000 casino workers and their supporters from all along the Eastern seaboard and as far away as Ohio and Michigan took over downtown Atlantic City for more than three hours on June 21. Not sticking to the Boardwalk, marchers took over the main drag, shouting “Negotiate!” and shaking their fists outside the casinos. Unionists vowed they would repeat the demonstration once a month until negotiations are underway. (New York Times, June 22)

Letter carriers opt for solidarity

When the Letter Carriers gather for their national convention July 21 to 25 in Boston, they have elected to let the food services corporation Aramark know as clearly as possible that it supports the just demands of UniteHere Local 26 for a wage hike and better benefits. How? By canceling all food services, even the usually lavish opening reception, as an act of solidarity with the workers’ struggle. An Aramark representative speculated that the cancellation might pressure the company to offer an agreement before the convention. (Boston Herald, June 17)

Three updates

- Three struggles moved to a new stage:
- Immigrant workers from India, who were lied to about being granted permanent visas and super-exploited by Signal International while rebuilding oil rigs in the Gulf, ended their hunger strike on June 12 when the Justice Department agreed to meet with their representatives to negotiate a settlement. (New York Times, June 12)
- After a hard-fought struggle, representation by the Union of Part-Time Faculty at Wayne State University was voted in nearly unanimously (245 to 3) on June 9, approved by the WSU board on June 18, and will take effect on July 16. (union press releases)
- In a viciously cynical maneuver to avoid a Bush veto, the House of Representatives attached a 13-week extension of unemployment benefits to a war-spending bill of \$162 billion, which was approved on June 19. (CNN.com, June 20) Though a record 8.5 million people are officially unemployed, with millions more unofficially without paying jobs, those billions wasted on war could be used to create thousands of jobs. □

Boston school bus drivers battle for justice

By Frank Neisser
Boston

The Boston School Bus Drivers Union, Steel Workers Local 8751, has consistently waged a struggle for economic and social justice. Nor have they limited it to the safety of the school children of Boston. The very existence and mission of the union is bound up with the struggle of the African-American community and other oppressed communities for equal education since the desegregation of Boston's schools by court-ordered busing in 1974.

Local 8751 was founded and built on rank-and-file militancy, winning union recognition and respect through nine wildcat strikes in 34 years. Its solidarity with the labor movement and community and its strength and unity have prevailed in all its contract battles since 1991 without the union having to go out on strike.

The union, which has an upstanding tradition of fighting militantly for its rights, has been mobilizing behind a slogan of “No concessions, no cuts” and “Safety for the children, justice for the drivers.” The slogan on the USW Task Force for Contract Justice T-shirt, under the graphic of a coiled and poised Cobra with fangs bared, says it all: “Local 8751 - will strike if provoked.”

‘No contract, no work’

Hundreds of Boston's school bus drivers took their battle for a just contract to First Student's door at the summer job bid where workers sign up to drive specific routes. The drivers liberated the block in front of the Washington Street School Bus Yard on June 21 from 5 a.m. until the bid ended at noon.

Reggae and Hip-Hop music boomed from the union's sound truck. The drivers' chants of “No contract, no work,” “First Student, you should know, union busting's got to go,” “Safety for the students, justice for the drivers” and “The buses don't roll til the union says **go!**” resounded far and wide. First Student is the name of the private nationwide bus monopoly employing the drivers.

The union workforce is over 80 percent Haitian and includes immigrants from many other countries and many African-American drivers as well.

Upon arriving at the yard, USW Task Force leaders deployed activists on and off the property, effectively seizing control of the drivers' room, the bid room, the lot and the gate. The organizers posted the walls with the message that all bids for routes were contingent on a signed contract between First Student and USW Local 8751.

After drivers signed up for summer work, they came out and joined the picket line. This sent a clear message to the company that unless a contract was in place, no buses will roll. The drivers' current contract with the company ends June 30, so picketers repeatedly chanted, “Eight more days.”

Solidarity with strikers

Members of the International Action Center were on hand to show their solidarity, as was Bishop Filipe Teixeira, OFSJC, and Ed Childs, chief shop steward of Unite/HERE Local 26. Childs' local is in the middle of a three-day strike for justice and an ongoing boycott against Aramark Corp. by food workers at the Hynes Convention Center and the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center.

The new African-American Superintendent of Schools, Carol Johnson, was so concerned about the situation that she was on hand inside the Washington Street

First Student facility starting at 5 a.m.

The USW Task Force for Contract Justice has been meeting and mobilizing since March to fight First Student and win the fair contract the drivers deserve. Within the last year First Student consolidated its monopoly in bus transportation in the United States by taking over its chief rival, Laidlaw Corporation, which owns Greyhound.

After eliminating the competition, the company extorted a \$6 million bonus and a \$343 million five-year contract from the Boston School Department. This no-bid, corrupt, sweetheart deal involved not only the City of Boston and First Group (the holding company for First Student), but also the U.S. Justice Department and the Massachusetts Attorney General.

The company has been systematically attacking worker rights, accumulating a five-year backlog of literally hundreds of unresolved grievances involving failure to pay in full for time worked as well as many other violations of workers rights.

In the negotiations, the company has demanded concessions from the union on work rules, safety and due process. For example, the bosses demanded the right to discipline drivers before an accident review board hearing ever takes place, criminalizing the drivers and making them “guilty until proven innocent.” The company also calls for job cuts, pay cuts and hours reductions, including using GPS surveillance to cut workers' pay.

The struggle for equality of education

Back in 1974, 20 years after the Supreme Court declared segregation unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education* in Topeka, Kansas, Boston was still running completely segregated schools. In the first year of court-ordered integration won by



Bus drivers' union president says

‘Community support is key to success’

Workers World interviewed Frantz Mendes, president of Steelworkers Local 8751 and the first Haitian immigrant president of a Steelworker' local.

WW: What are the main issues in the current contract negotiations with the company?

Frantz Mendes: The city and the company are looking for massive concessions and job cuts. They are seeking to cut jobs and hours across the board, from the top of the seniority list to the bottom, including citywide drivers and standby drivers. The company is also trying to use GPS [Global Positioning System] and a Zonar fleet management system to cut routes.

WW: What type of community support does the union have or is the union seeking?

the struggle of African-American parents, the school buses were attacked by racist forces and Boston became an international symbol of racism.

It took a 25,000-strong national march against racism in Boston in December 1974 to take the wind out of the sails of the racist mobilization. At that time there had not been a person of color on either the Boston City Council or the Boston School Committee since Reconstruction. Throughout that time and since, the union has been the strongest ally of parents of color in their fight for access to quality education for their children.

It should come as no surprise then that as the union fights for a fair contract, the powerful racist forces in the city, starting with three-term Mayor Thomas Menino, have renewed their racist campaign for a return to neighborhood schools and have attacked the transportation program. In his state-of-the-city address in January, Menino called for revamping the school assignment process and returning to neighborhood schools.

During the 35 years of desegregation, the city systematically closed schools in the oppressed communities of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan. That means children of color have no neighborhood schools to go to there.

In a move reminiscent of 1974—when the racist anti-busing organization was led by the Boston City Council and organized from City Council chambers in Boston City Hall—the racist forces on today's Boston City Council called a hearing on June 13 to grill the Superintendent of Schools and the Boston School Department. The racists demanded to know when the school officials would have a new student assignment and transportation plan ready to

follow Mayor Menino's plan. It should be noted the Boston School Committee is now appointed by the Mayor.

At the forefront fighting against this continual drive to return to the racist past have been African-American City Councilor Councilor Chuck Turner and Team Unity, Boston city councilors of color, with unstinting support from the Boston School Bus Drivers Union.

Union's role in anti-racist struggle

In 2004, when the last attempt was made to dismantle access to equal quality education through an attack on the student assignment plan, the bus drivers passed out thousands of leaflets to the students on the buses to alert and mobilize parents to a community meeting at the 12th Baptist Church in Roxbury where the plan was to be reviewed. The community came out hundreds strong and made clear it would not tolerate a return to the racist past with communities of color denied access to the best educational opportunities.

This year when the racist city councilors, led by Ways and Means Committee Chair Steve Murphy, called their hearing on the student assignment model, City Councilor Turner eloquently expressed the community's opposition. But parents and the community were unable to come forward in large numbers because the hearing was deliberately called in the middle of a workday with virtually no notice.

The Boston School Bus Drivers Union, along with the International Action Center and Work for Quality—the community group that has been fighting and organizing on this issue since 2004—were there to roundly denounce the racists' plan and call it the racist attack that it is. □



Children and their families support the school bus drivers.

WW PHOTOS:
LIZ GREEN

and speaking out against it. Over the past 30 years the city has closed down many schools in Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan where students of color live. There are no walk-to schools left in our communities. Community-labor solidarity has never been more important than now to fight this racist attack.

WW: What lessons do you see for the labor movement from the struggle of the school bus drivers' union?

FM: The lesson I see for the labor movement is that we need unity. We can't rely on politicians who claim to be “friends of labor” because when the chips are down they aren't there. The slogan of the labor movement is “An injury to one is an injury to all.” If any union sister or brother is hurt it should be everyone's concern. □

Annual celebration a call for all to fight sexual oppression

Stonewall Rebellion & the tasks ahead

By Bob McCubbin

We reprint this article from *Workers World of June 27, 1975*, as part of our archival series. In 1976, the writer, Bob McCubbin, published the first edition of his ground-breaking book, now titled *“The Roots of Lesbian & Gay Oppression: A Marxist View”* and available from *LeftBooks.com*.

NEW YORK, June 23 — “Hundreds of young men went on a rampage in Greenwich Village shortly after 3 a.m. yesterday after a force of plainclothesmen raided a bar that the police said was well known for its homosexual clientele. Thirteen persons were arrested and four policemen injured.”

Thus did the New York Times, the American bourgeoisie’s “newspaper of record,” announce the Stonewall Rebellion in its edition of June 29, 1969.

The report continued, “The raid was one of three held on Village bars in the last two weeks, Inspector Pine said. Charges against the 13 who were arrested ranged from harassment and resisting arrest to disorderly conduct. A patrolman suffered a broken wrist, the police said. Throngs of young men congregated outside the inn last night, reading aloud condemnations of the police.”

Although the Times account was brief and didn’t mention the leading role in the rebellion played by lesbians [and trans people], it was probably more than the Times or any other newspaper had written about gay people in the 14 years since the widely publicized and Nazi-like roundup of large numbers of gay men in Boise, Idaho, in 1955. It was followed by further accounts as the disorders continued through Wednesday of the following week.

Stonewall spurred gay visibility

As with many historical turning points, the importance of the Stonewall Rebellion was not immediately recognized. But as

the months passed, more and more gay women and men rallied to the new cry of “Gay Power!” both in the U.S. and abroad. Gays began raising demands for full equality as other oppressed people were already doing. And, as they had in the past, gay people continued to support the struggles against racism, war and in support of prisoners, only now their gay pride buttons and lavender armbands ensured that their proud presence in the front ranks of the struggle would be visible to all.

Stonewall was a historic breakthrough for gay people, and it has come to symbolize the kind of bold and militant action that has won for gays a number of concessions and a measure of respect. But the annual celebration of the Stonewall Rebellion which takes place each year at the end of June is more than a gay holiday. It is a call to all people to take up the struggle against sexual oppression.

Gay oppression hurts straights, too

On a spring evening in 1961 a young man named William Hall stood waiting for a trolley near his home in San Francisco. A short while later he was dead, the victim of a gang of hoodlums who decided to kill him when he answered their question, “Are you a queer?” with one of his own: “What if I asked you that question?” There is no evidence that William Hall was gay, but he was the victim of an anti-gay attack.

Pvt. Donald Weir got fed up with the U.S. Army in 1965 and decided to use the ruse of homosexuality to get out. It worked fine, but three years later he was fired from his civilian job for falsifying his military background. “But I’m not really a homosexual,” he pleaded. His belated confession was not believed. Previously deprived of military benefits because of the “undesirable” discharge, he now faced the task of finding another job with the stigma of homosexuality stamped on his

work record.

These incidents and thousands like them show that the struggle against gay oppression involves even more than the millions of gay women and men who live in fear of losing their jobs, their homes, their children and their lives, more even than the thousands of gay prisoners who suffer brutalization, rape and the legal torture of behavior modification programs. Anti-gay prejudice is used against straight people too. It is, in essence, an ideological weapon of the ruling class, a historically rooted prejudice which is used to generate fear, doubt and suspicion among working people, both gay and straight, thus leaving them more vulnerable and divided before the class enemy.

Laws against love

Though intimate relationships between people of the same sex hurt no one, they are against the law in most states. Similarly, most states have laws restricting sexual expression between heterosexuals to the procreative act of intercourse. Of course these laws are not often enforced. But the point is that, enforced or not, they set a tone of fear and repression, emboldening the police and reinforcing ignorance and backward ideas of sinfulness among the people.

When the working class of Russia took

power under the leadership of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party, one of the first acts of the new government was to remove the tsarist laws against homosexuality and sodomy. The Bolshevik position was summarized in a Soviet pamphlet called “The Sexual Revolution in Russia,” published in 1923: “Concerning homosexuality, sodomy, and various other forms of sexual gratification, which are set down in European legislation as offenses against public morality—Soviet legislation treats these exactly the same as so-called “natural” intercourse. All forms of sexual intercourse are private matters. Only when there is use of force or duress ... is there a question of criminal prosecution.”

As more and more people, gay and straight alike, commit ourselves to building a revolutionary working class movement in the country, we are ensuring a return to the inspiring tradition of the Bolsheviks under material conditions far more favorable to total victory for the exploited and oppressed masses. And the victory of socialism, under the leadership of gay and straight revolutionaries, will end forever the social conditions that spawned and have perpetuated the sexual and homosexual prejudices of class society. Long live the spirit of the Stonewall Rebellion! Smash capitalism, the source of our oppression! □

Legal victory for two of Jersey 4

By LeiLani Dowell
New York

A legal victory was recently won in the case of two of the Jersey Four, but resistance is still needed to free all of them.

The four young, African-American lesbians were convicted in June 2007 for so-called gang assault charges, in relation to an August 2006 event in New York’s West Village. They had defended themselves against a man who, in a bigoted, anti-lesbian frenzy, choked them, ripped hair from their scalps, spat at them and threatened to sexually assault them. The four have been unjustly imprisoned for the past two years.

On June 19, the conviction of 21-year-old Terrain Dandridge was vacated, with the indictment against her dismissed, meaning she cannot face a retrial on those charges and is free from her three-and-a-half-year prison sentence. A four-judge panel ruled that the evidence did not support a guilty verdict.

The conviction of 26-year-old Renata Hill was also vacated, but she faces the possibility of a new trial as the indictment against her was not dismissed. The panel ruled that the judge in the initial trial had given erroneous instructions to the jury, so the conviction could not be upheld. Alexis Agathocleous, Hill’s lawyer, told the New York Times that he hopes “that the district attorney’s office will also do the right thing and dismiss the remaining charge.” (June 19) Hill had originally been sentenced to eight years in prison.

Meanwhile, appeals for Patreese Johnson and Venice Brown are still underway. Johnson had been sentenced to 11 years in prison, which the New York Post gleefully reported was “the highest several defense lawyers had ever heard of for a nonfatal stabbing.” (June 15, 2007) Brown received five years.

Self-defense is a right!

Given sentences ranging from three-and-a-half to a staggering 11 years, the Jersey 4 are political prisoners when viewed against a backdrop of state repression, racism, anti-LGBT bigotry and the gentrification of the West Village, which has historically been a center for lesbian, gay, bi and trans youth, particularly youth of color.

The corporate media had bolstered the attack on the women throughout the trial, calling them a “lesbian wolf pack” (Daily News, April 19, 2007) and a “gang of angry lesbians” (Daily News, April 13, 2007). The media spectacle, along with the convictions, was an attempt to send the distorted message that self-defense is not a right for people of color, LGBT people or youth.

Three of their friends—Chenese Loyal, Lania Daniels and Khamysha Coates—were also given felony charges that, according to the Bay Area Solidarity Committee, “prevent them from getting jobs, registering for housing and other unjust discrimination.” (freenj4.wordpress.com, June 21)

Support for the Jersey 4 has spread across the country. On June 24, Dandridge, her mother Kimma Walker and Angela Davis will address an audience at the San Francisco Women’s Building “in order to unravel the experiences of violence that Queer people of color face and how to prepare ourselves and our communities in the face of police harassment, criminalization and mass incarceration.” (freenj4.wordpress.com, June 21) The event is co-sponsored by Critical Resistance, LAGAI - Queer Insurrection, Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism, San Francisco Women Against Rape, Radical Women and Gay Shame San Francisco.

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WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Pride forum held in Boston

By the Boston Workers World Bureau

Stonewall Warriors, Women’s Fightback Network and the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) held a forum here June 20 on “Pride is Solidarity and Struggle—Come Out against Racism, Sexism, Foreclosures and War.” Oriented toward youth, the forum featured LeiLani Dowell of FIST and Shaka McPherson

from the Boston Youth Organizing Project. The audience participated in a lively discussion following the talks.

Dowell urged unity and solidarity to confront injustices like the acquittal of the cops who murdered Sean Bell and the jailing of the Jersey 4, four lesbians prosecuted for defending themselves against an anti-LGBT attack. She also discussed the can-

Continued on page 9

Health care in crisis, part 2:

Democrats' quick fix is no solution for workers

By David Hoskins

Voters will go to the polls in November desperate for change and with high hopes that the next president will pass and sign universal health care for everyone living in the United States.

The hopes and expectations for meaningful change are perfectly understandable. The crisis in U.S. health care has left 50 million people uninsured and another 25 million underinsured.

The lack of government investment has contributed to massive public hospital closures. According to the American Hospital Association there were approximately 1,800 public hospitals in the United States in 1980. By 2006 almost 700 of these hospitals had closed. Public hospitals are medical providers of last resort for the uninsured and handle disproportionately more cases of abuse, trauma, drug addiction, alcoholism and AIDS than their private counterparts. The closures leave many poor and working-class patients without access to the life-saving treatments they desperately need.

Despite the severity of the health-care

crisis, it is unlikely the next president will pass a truly universal health-care bill. The political system of U.S. capitalism is heavily stacked against all reformers—inside and outside of government. The corporations and billionaires who profit from the health-care crisis will do everything in their power to prevent universal health care from being signed into law. Neither major party has signaled a willingness to propose and fight for a universal health-care system.

The Republican Party and its presidential candidate John McCain are not even pretending to offer solutions to the very real crisis facing workers in this country. McCain's proposal would actually exacerbate the health-care crisis by expanding market-based competition and shifting more of the burden for coverage onto individual workers.

Voters have, however, projected much of their hope for health-care justice onto the Democratic Party in general and its presidential nominee Barack Obama in particular.

The Democrats realized this early on and have claimed the mantle of reform in their campaigns for president and Congress.

Much of the Democratic presidential primary was spent on mind-numbing debate over the details of the top contenders' "universal" health-care plans. Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton led the charge that Obama's plan was not truly universal because it did not contain a mandate requiring everyone to purchase

insurance.

Senator Obama, meanwhile, counter-charged that Clinton's plan unfairly penalized poor and working adults who may not be able to afford even subsidized insurance.

The fact is that both Obama and Clinton were correct in their respective critiques and neither candidate's plan offers truly universal coverage. As Dr. Steffie Woolhandler, professor of medicine at Harvard University and co-founder of Physicians for a National Health Plan, points out: "Hillary and Obama are both right. Hillary's individual mandates would, as Obama charges, financially punish uninsured families. Obama's plan contains no individual mandate, but would, as Hillary charges, fail to cover 15 million or more Americans."

Obama has promised that by the end of his first term in office the U.S. will have universal health insurance. Obama's health-care plan, however well-intended it may be, fails to deliver on this promise.

Obama's plan essentially prohibits private insurers from denying anyone coverage, regardless of medical history, and provides subsidies to help low-income workers purchase health insurance. The plan also allows people to buy into government insurance instead of purchasing private coverage. Obama's proposal mandates parents to purchase coverage for their children, but otherwise has no individual requirement to buy insurance.

The fatal flaw with the Democratic health-care proposals is that the wasteful

and profit-driven private insurance system is left intact. This makes it very difficult to increase coverage without incurring extraordinary costs both for the government and for individual workers who will not be able to afford the coverage with or without a mandate.

Rose Ann DeMoro, executive director of the California Nurses Association, contends that "you cannot reform health care by selling insurance. Expanding the reach of the insurance industry—which is at the center of all the [major] candidates' plans—is not universal health care and it will not control costs. Forcing people to buy insurance, especially while insurers can continue to charge as much as they want and still deny needed medical care, further entrenches a broken system, and it's not humane."

The Democrats' health-care models of expanded private insurance have already been attempted in Massachusetts, where former Republican Governor Mitt Romney signed a bill requiring every adult to purchase insurance or face penalties. The group Physicians for a National Health Plan estimates that prohibitive costs have prevented at least 250,000 of the state's uninsured from purchasing private insurance despite the threat of year-end financial penalties. A national health plan based on this model will likely have even greater difficulty providing affordable insurance to every single person living in the United States.

Next: Single-payer reform as an immediate demand.



WW PHOTOS: PATRICIA JACKSON



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Unions mobilize to demand health care

On June 19, several thousand universal health-care advocates, activists and supporters rallied and picketed in front of the American Health Insurance Plans convention taking place in San Francisco. Signs read "Healthcare YES, insurance companies NO," "Single payer = public financed health insurance for all" and "Health care is a human right." Many groups and unions carried signs

and banners in support of current state and federal proposals—Senate Bill 840 in California and House Resolution 676 in the U.S. Congress—to make health care available for everyone.

In New York on the same day, hundreds turned out in front of the office of the non-profit health insurer GHI and then marched to the office of UnitedHealth. Speakers included Ralph Nader,

actor Vinie Burrows, Dr. Oliver Fein of Physicians for a National Health Program and Ronald Crenshaw from District Council 37. Many people spoke against a current proposal to merge GHI and HIP into a for-profit company.

The California action was organized by many groups, including the California Universal Health Care Organizing Project, participants from the Senior Action

Network, SF Gray Panthers, California Nurses Association, California Physicians' Alliance, California School Employees Association, United Educators of San Francisco and many other unions. The New York action was organized by the Coalition Against Privatization and many others.

—Joan Marquardt and Anne Pruden

Is U.S. preparing another war—on Iran?

By Deirdre Griswold

Israel on June 2 carried out military maneuvers over the eastern Mediterranean. As many as 100 F-16 and F-15 jets supplied to Israel by the Pentagon were involved alongside Israeli helicopters with long-range fuel tanks. The F-16 is a jet fighter also equipped to carry a wide variety of air-to-ground missiles, rockets or bombs.

The target of the exercise was 900 miles from Israel, roughly the same distance as Iran’s nuclear enrichment facility at Natanz. Numerous news accounts said the maneuvers were a rehearsal for an Israeli military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities.

What was Washington’s reaction to Israel’s blatant threat to commit aggression and violate international law with U.S.-supplied weapons?

Two days after the war move, President George W. Bush held a press conference in Washington with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Bush tried to deflect criticism of Israel’s military moves by saying, bizarrely, “Iran is an existential threat to peace.” He might as well have said, “Bring ‘em on!”

Yet another war?

U.S. imperialism is already bogged down in highly unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where it is pressuring and bribing other countries to put up troops that the Pentagon can’t provide, short of reinstating the draft and igniting a rebellion among the youth of this country.

Every “sweep” or bombing by U.S. forces, with the inevitable widespread death and destruction that powerful weapons cause, just stiffens the resolve of millions of people in these countries and throughout the region to resist the invaders.

The people of the U.S. have turned decisively against these wars. They remember the lie about Iraq having “weapons of mass destruction” that Bush used to bulldoze support from Congress and the media and which paved the road to invasion.

The U.S. has recently bombed within

Pakistan in the name of Bush’s fictitious “war on terror.” It has sponsored an Ethiopian-backed invasion of Somalia, backed up by the CIA and ships of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, including the humongous aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower.

Yet the warmakers in Washington are now brazenly organizing an international campaign of intimidation against Iran, laying the basis for a possible air attack on yet another country. While the Iranian government is taking all these threats very calmly, the potential for the threats to turn into actual aggression is real.

On June 23, undoubtedly after much pressure from Washington, the European Union announced it was imposing sanctions on Iran, including a freeze on the assets of the Melli Bank, the country’s biggest.

Iran has done nothing wrong

The excuse given for all this warlike activity against the country with the world’s fourth-largest known oil reserves is that Washington “suspects” it has a nuclear weapons program. This is such a huge lie that the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammad El-Baradei, has threatened to resign if Iran is attacked.

Here are the facts:

Back in 2003, the Iranian government signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Under that treaty, it has the right to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

According to the IAEA, which has carried out many inspections of Iran’s nuclear facilities, there is absolutely no evidence that it is building weapons. Iran has said publicly many times that it has no weapons program and needs to develop nuclear power for the day when its oil starts running out.

With the world demand for oil rising every day, this is a real possibility that all oil-producing countries face. Iran, how-

ever, is not a small sheikdom like Kuwait (2.5 million people) or a desert kingdom like Saudi Arabia (27 million), but a country with more than 65 million people and a developing economy that needs energy. Its oil reserves are about 83 percent of Iraq’s, but its population is almost two and a half times as large.

It is not surprising or sinister that it would want to invest in diversifying its energy sources now, at a time when its oil sales are still ample and command a strong price.

On the other hand, everyone knows that Israel does have nuclear weapons.

Jane’s Defense Review, which is considered the most authoritative source in the world on this subject, says Israel has up to 200 nuclear warheads and that its nuclear weapons program began in the 1960s. Mordechai Vanunu, a former Israeli nuclear technician, was abducted by Israeli agents in 1986 for revealing details of this program to the world media.

Israel, unlike Iran, has never signed the non-proliferation treaty or joined the IAEA.

So why isn’t Bush saying that Israel is an “existential threat to world peace”?

Israel is the tail, not the dog

Some rabid anti-Semites in the U.S. say this is because Israel dictates U.S. foreign policy. This is saying that the tail wags the dog. The truth is that the non-Jewish ruling classes in the U.S. and some European countries, especially Britain, have long regarded a Zionist settler state in the Middle East as a potent ally in their struggle to deny the Arab and Persian peoples control over their land and most valuable economic asset—oil.

That is why the U.S. has bankrolled the state of Israel to the tune of \$102 billion since 1948. By the Pentagon’s standards, it’s been a cheap way to project U.S. imperialist power in that part of the world. By

contrast, the war in Iraq has cost more than \$531 billion in five years—and that’s not counting the future costs of disabled veterans and other “collateral” expenses.

Oil companies, the huge transnational banks linked with them and their associated think tanks—like the Rockefeller-funded Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission—have been dominant players in the U.S. foreign policy establishment. They have produced many of the political figures who have persuaded the government to launch wars over this lucrative commodity.

Today, workers in the U.S. are hurting badly over high oil prices. The imperialist war policies of the Bush administration have contributed mightily to this—by creating havoc in Iraq, by the Pentagon’s consumption of vast quantities of oil and by creating an atmosphere akin to panic in the futures markets.

But where is the political opposition to all this? Not in Congress. No one is rising to condemn Bush for using Israel against Iran. No one is linking the oil companies’ record profits—in a time of recession—to U.S. wars of aggression in the Middle East. No one is telling workers here that their enemy is not Iran or Iraq, but ExxonMobil and BP.

In the presidential race, Barack Obama says he’s for negotiations with Iran’s leaders while reiterating his unconditional support for Israel. John McCain goes even further and rejects diplomacy. But diplomacy, it should be said, is only another tactic in imperialism’s overall strategy of world domination. If talks don’t produce the results the imperialists want—in this case, Iran’s capitulation—what comes next? Neither imperialist party rules out military action against Iran.

All this leaves any hope for real struggle against the warmongers on the shoulders of the masses of people themselves. Turning from passive opposition to active resistance is needed more than ever.

For information on mobilizing against a new war on Iran, see StopWarOnIran.org. E-mail: dgriswold@workers.org



EU joins the U.S. in targeting immigrants

By G. Dunkel

On June 18, the European Union adopted a common repressive policy toward undocumented workers who are caught by the authorities. Those arrested can be sentenced to prison for up to 18 months simply for not having legal papers, can be held without due process, no longer will be offered free legal assistance, and can be deported and kept out of every EU country for five years.

The Spanish state was among those leading the campaign against undocumented workers. Some 2,000 such workers are already being held in detention centers. Many immigrants to Europe from Latin America first go to Spain because the language barrier is lower. Millions of workers from North and Sub-Saharan Africa also migrate to the wealthier EU countries.

Ever since their economies started declining and poorly paid workers from the new EU members in Eastern Europe—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia—started legally moving westward by the hundreds of thousands, the leading imperialist powers in Europe have further opened the spigots of racism and xenophobia.

These are the bosses’ favorite tools for intimidating workers without papers and forcing them to work clandestinely for much lower wages.

Progressive Latin American leaders reacted angrily to the new ruling. Bolivian President Evo Morales denounced the EU ruling before it was passed, and was joined later by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, Paraguayan President-elect Fernando Lugo, former President Fidel Castro of Cuba, Brazilian Foreign Relations Minister Celso Amorim, Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, and the head of the Organization of American States.

“If any European country begins to apply this,” said Chávez, “and puts in jail Colombians, Paraguayans, Ecuadorians, Bolivians ... then we are going to review the investments that they have here in order for us as well to apply a return order. Return their investments to them!”

Morales pointed out in the June 16 British Guardian that the “return directive ... imposes harsh terms for detention and deportation of undocumented immigrants, regardless of the time they have spent in European countries, their work situation, [or] their family ties.”

Morales noted the economic consequences of this new EU policy: “For us,

our emigrants represent help in development that Europeans do not give us. ... Latin America received, in 2006, a total of \$68 billion sent back from abroad, more than the total foreign investment in our countries. My country, Bolivia, received more than 10 percent of its GDP in such remittances.”

He asked, “Under so-called ‘judicial protection’ we are being pressured to denationalize water, gas and telecommunications. Where is the ‘judicial protection’ for our people seeking new horizons in Europe?”

Fidel Castro, in two “Reflections” written June 20 and 22, tied the actions of the EU to Washington’s reactionary policies. In his first posting, he wrote, “The discredited way in which the European Union suspended its sanctions on Cuba on June 19 ... has absolutely no economic effect on our country. On the contrary, the United States’ extraterritorial laws and, thus, its economic and financial blockades, are still fully in effect. ...

“I want to express my contempt towards the immense hypocrisy of that decision. Such hypocrisy is made all the more evident by the brutal European measure to expel illegal immigrants from Latin American countries, some of which have

populations which, in their majority, are of European origin.

“Traffickers of human beings, like drug traffickers, who take advantage of the largest and most coveted of the world’s markets, have undermined the authority and moral stature needed by any government to lead the state, spilling Latin American blood everywhere, to say nothing of those who die trying to emigrate by climbing over the humiliating border wall erected over what was once Mexican territory.

“The food and energy crises, climate change and inflation are scourging the world’s nations. As political helplessness prevails, ignorance and illusions tend to flourish.”

Castro also pointed out that what pushes people in Latin America to emigrate is the hunger and poverty that the U.S. and the developed countries of Western Europe impose on them. (cubadebate.cu)

In Spain dozens of human rights and other progressive organizations joined to hold public demonstrations or meetings on June 21 in five cities—Madrid, Málaga, Barcelona, Valencia and Tenerife—to oppose the new repressive ruling against immigrants. They chanted, “No human beings are illegal!” and demanded that the detention centers be closed. □

Imperialists butt in as opposition abandons Zimbabwe election

ZANU-PF denies human rights violations

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Reports emanating from Western press agencies and Zimbabwe opposition forces claim that acts of violence and political repression have led to the withdrawal of the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai from the June 27 run-off elections. As a result of these accusations, which include acts of arson and murder, there have been fresh calls for intensifying the existing economic sanctions against this southern African nation. On June 23 it was also reported that the leader of the MDC-T, Morgan Tsvangirai, had taken temporary “refuge” in the Dutch embassy in Zimbabwe.

Nonetheless, the President of Zimbabwe and leader of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriot Front Party (ZANU-PF), Robert Mugabe, has denied that the state and its security apparatus, as well as its organizational cadre, have engaged in acts of retribution against the Western-backed opposition MDC-T.

According to an article published in the state newspaper, The Herald, on June 24, Pres. Mugabe accused the Western imperialist nations of further attempts to overthrow the ruling party. The veteran leader was “addressing more than 15,000 people at Gaza Stadium in Chipinge yesterday, when he said: ‘Britain and her allies are telling a lot of lies about Zimbabwe, saying a lot of people are dying. These are all lies because they want to build a situation to justify their intervention in Zimbabwe.’”

President Mugabe “urged Zimbabweans to safeguard the country’s sovereignty by voting for him in Friday’s presidential run-off since MDC-T was a creation of the West.” The Herald article continues: “[A]ddressing thousands of Zanu-PF supporters at Masvosva Business Center in Makoni West later during the day, Comrade Mugabe said people should ensure an emphatic victory for the ruling party in memory of those who perished during the liberation struggle.

“He said many sons and daughters from Manicaland died during the struggle and people in the province should not allow

the country to be recolonized.”

In another article published in the Zimbabwe Herald on June 24, it states that: “Two days after announcing his intention to withdraw from the June 27 presidential run-off, MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai is yet to write to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to make his position official. It was only later that day that Tsvangirai’s withdrawal letter reached the ZEC.

“ZEC yesterday said it was ready for Friday’s presidential run-off and the three House of Assembly by-elections with deployment of polling officers having started while election material is being moved to the districts.”

UN Security Council statement

On June 23, after five hours of debate, the United Nations Security Council issued a statement in response to the political situation in Zimbabwe. The statement read in part that the atmosphere inside the country “made it impossible for a free and fair election to take place.” The statement was passed with a unanimous vote.

However, an alternative statement that called for placing opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai in power by recognizing him as the de facto leader of the country was rejected. This statement was drafted by the United States, Britain and France, and would have provided a political weapon to justify further support for the Western-backed MDC-T in its quest for regime change in Zimbabwe.

The current strategy of the Western nations is to work toward the total denial of international legitimacy and recognition of the ZANU-PF government in Zimbabwe. The passage of this United Nations resolution represents the first time that the internal affairs of Zimbabwe have come before the Security Council where China, South Africa and Russia voted to criticize the Southern African nation.

The government of Zimbabwe has been under tremendous pressure since the year 2000 in the aftermath of the seizure of farmland controlled by the European-origin settlers. The white farmers controlled most of the arable land as a by-

product of the continued legacy of British colonialism, which ruled the country from the 1890s until the time of national independence in 1980.

The formal independence of Zimbabwe was won through a protracted armed struggle that lasted between the mid-1960s until the convening of the Lancaster House Summit held in late 1979. The Lancaster House Agreement created the conditions for the transition of state power from the settler-colonialists regime of Ian Smith to the liberation movements of ZANU-PF and the now dissolved Zimbabwe African People’s Union (ZAPU-PF), which eventually merged with ZANU-PF in 1987.

Imperialist slander campaign

Sanctions carried out against Zimbabwe by the British, American and EU states, coupled with an internationally coordinated campaign of slander and vilification of the ruling party and the government, has isolated the country and severely crippled its economy. Zimbabwe has become more dependent on food aid and has not been able to acquire significant credit from international financial institutions.

The country has not collapsed because of the political and economic support given to it by China and South Africa. The Western nations have pressured the Republic of South Africa to refuse to allow goods to be transported to Zimbabwe through its territory and also to cut off power supplies emanating from South Africa into Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is a landlocked country with no direct access to the Indian Ocean. Mozambique to the east has also served as a route for goods coming into Zimbabwe. During the 1980s and early 1990s,

when the apartheid-backed Movement of National Resistance in Mozambique was terrorizing the country, Zimbabwe deployed 10,000 of its own troops to guard the Beira Corridor from attacks by the armed opposition. This act of solidarity prevented the further weakening of the economies of both Mozambique and Zimbabwe during this period.

The effectiveness of any tightening of existing sanctions against Zimbabwe will depend upon the response of the governments of both South Africa and Mozambique. The ZANU-PF ruling party has stated on several occasions during the recent run-off elections campaign that it will not turn over power to the Western-backed MDC-T. Certainly the United Nations Security Council’s actions will embolden the Western imperialist nations and its allies inside Zimbabwe.

However, the ultimate political outcome of this crisis surrounding Zimbabwe will depend upon the course taken by the governments within the South African Development Community, particularly Mozambique and South Africa, along with the alignment of forces within Zimbabwe itself.

It is obvious that the ruling ZANU-PF still maintains substantial support inside the country. How the ruling party responds to the escalation of international pressure will set the stage for the next phase of the struggle to ensure the continued independence and sovereignty of the nation of Zimbabwe.

For additional background on Zimbabwe, see “Zimbabwe set for run-off presidential election” by Azikiwe in the June 26 issue of WW (workers.org) or see panafricannews.blogspot.com.



WW PHOTO: ED CHILDS

Pride forum held in Boston

Continued from page 6

didacy of Barack Obama and the economic crisis. She pointed out the importance of being vigilant to defend Obama against racist attacks on his candidacy, while at the same time recognizing that change will come from the peoples’ struggle and mobilizing in the streets and not from any candidate of the big-business parties.

McPherson had played a leading role in organizing an AIDS-awareness youth forum in Dorchester on June 14, the day of Boston Pride. The youth organizer spoke on reaching out beyond the particular area of struggle you are directly involved in and connecting with others as one overall struggle against injustice.

Another FIST organizer, Miya Campbell, who is also in the Women’s Fightback Network, read an Audre Lorde poem and discussed how the economic crisis and rising costs of food and gas were affect-

ing all working people and youth. She told how the WFN is planning street actions to protest the price hikes and utility shutoffs. She also raised issues confronting youth and brought up the police attack on revolutionary hip-hop artist Rebel Diaz in the Bronx, N.Y., calling on all to be in solidarity with the struggle of youth against police brutality.

Frank Neisser of Stonewall Warriors filled in the history of what the Stonewall Rebellion was all about and how it was led by trans people of color in pitched battle with the New York City police. Neisser discussed the initiatives that socialist countries, from the early Bolsheviks to today’s Cuba, have taken to combat lesbian/gay/bi/trans oppression and hailed Cuba’s action in making gender reassignment surgery available free and on demand. Gerry Scoppettuolo of Stonewall Warriors chaired the meeting. □

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BIG OIL & IRAQ

paying the bill

Oil, blood and profits

The Bush presidency has been remarkable in its extraordinary ability to outdo in arrogance and blatant selfishness what most administrations would try to cover up with mounds of hypocrisy. Not that it doesn't have its share of hypocrisy, and it certainly has lied at least as much as any administration in U.S. history, but in the end, greed trumps all else.

Thus we were told last week without any question or doubt what the criminal invasion of Iraq was about. Oil.

Not that this was a surprise. Not to us in this editorial space nor to some 20 million people everywhere who demonstrated in the months before March 20, 2003, including the many who raised the banner, "No blood for oil!"

Mostly Iraqi blood has been spilled. But also the blood of some 4,100 U.S. working-class youth who were deceived into acting as the foot-soldiers for an oppressive and illegal invasion, plus tens of thousands more wounded, has been spilled for over five years, and on June 30 the end deal for all this blood is to be announced.

The four major oil companies that were ejected in 1972 by the Iraqi revolution—Exxon Mobil, Shell, Total and BP—are supposed to be on the verge of re-entering Iraq to continue with the exploitation of its oil and its people. The new oil contracts also include Chevron.

So the U.S.- and British-based oil monopolies, and even the French-based Total, will be back in business—if nothing interrupts them in the next few days. Since there is an active resistance in Iraq, interruptions are possible. And the business of U.S. imperialism is business, especially oil and weapons.

In keeping with the blatant character of the Bush gang's rule, these oil companies got in without having to go through the formality of competitive bidding. Remember that meeting—the "private" one—between Vice President Dick Cheney and the oil executives very early in the Bush administration? Perhaps that's when the promises were made.

It will be interesting to see who, among the Iraqi puppet politicians, will be willing to be photographed shaking hands over this deal giving away Iraq's national wealth. Or will this, too, all be done in private?

A side question, for those who remember the France-bashing days of "freedom

fries," is what has the current French government of Nicolas Sarkozy done to earn a place for Total at the oil well? Will more French battalions be on their way to Afghanistan?

Congress makes a deal

Not to be outdone in this time of deal-making with the Bush administration, the U.S. Congress, with its narrow Democratic Party majority, has again opted for war.

We are not among those who say there is no difference between the Republican and Democratic parties. There are many differences, including the sections of U.S. society that make up their constituencies. But we are clear that these are two parties whose national leadership, ideology and history put them firmly in the position of defending the interests of U.S. imperialism, including waging foreign wars of aggression.

Granted, these days the Democrats are not so blatant about it. So when they opt to again support the war machine, as the House Democrats did in helping to pass a \$162 billion war appropriations bill, they look for a cover.

Their cover was an amendment for supplemental unemployment payments for an additional 13 weeks for those many workers out of work more than 26 weeks. They also passed an amendment granting significant benefits to military veterans, including a 21st-century version of the old GI Bill of Rights that sent so many World War II veterans to college. Big, big guns with a small pat of margarine. And it was while Congress was also cutting down funds for student loans to civilian youths.

In 2006 a majority of Democrats were elected to the House because people believed they would stop the war in Iraq and bring the troops home. Not as blatant as the Republicans, but at least as hypocritical, the Democratic Party leaders have certainly failed to keep that promise.

The lesson of all this is that it is past time for the tens of millions of anti-war people in the United States to rise out of inactivity, stop waiting or counting on elections or on politicians of either of the two major capitalist parties, and get back in the streets to struggle to end the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, the threats against Iran and aggression anywhere on this globe. □



Larry Hales in Palestine.

Another open letter

to Branford Marsalis

Mr. Marsalis, perhaps by now you've seen or heard about the open letter to you from the British Committee for Universities of Palestine regarding your quartet's concert date in Tel Aviv on July 17.

It's an appeal I'd like to echo here, while again raising the call for a boycott of Israel by academicians and cultural artists that the BRICUP letter mentions, which can be found at www.pacbi.org.

I'd like to appeal to you not solely on the basis of my being an aficionado of the Black musical tradition, and you being a giant in that tradition, but as one brother to another—a brother who is a writer to a great musician who has embraced the entire scope of Black music and culture; a brother who has been to Palestine to a brother who is slated to play in the capital of the Zionist entity.

The lament of the Palestinian is a similar refrain to our own. Music, all culture, cannot help but reflect the material conditions of the people that the music-maker comes from. A person's artistic self is an extension of her or his political self. Jazz is indeed subtle, and perhaps more open to interpretation, but at its essence, when created by a Black person in tune to the conditions of Black folk, it is an expression of the desire and the struggle for true liberation.

Of course, you know that our musical tradition sprang from our history of struggle. From the Sorrow Songs of the days of slavery to the vocal blues tradition to jazz, soul music and hip hop, the evolution of our music is tied to the dialectical nature of the Black freedom struggle that continues to this day.

Then, the traditions of the Palestinians, though from a different historical development and a unique struggle, are similar to ours.

To play a concert in Israel, which recently celebrated 60 years of the creation of the Israeli state that usurped Palestinian land, displaced 750,000 Palestinian people and has balanced its weight on the hopes and dreams of all Palestinians, would be a disavowal of the suffering of another people and a validation of the crimes of the state of Israel.

All of history is important, but we are at a crucial juncture and living in a world rife with contradictions and suffering. Even in a rich nation like the U.S. there is a seething lower rung of the poor and disposed, whose greatest numbers are people of color—Black, Latin@, Asian, Arab—and poor whites as well.

Now, moral conviction is needed—not the moral conviction of those who hold power, but of the oppressed and artists like yourself who play to thousands and whose music touches the lives of millions.

How can the suffering of the Palestinian people be ignored—millions of people denied freedom of movement and their human rights? Israel is a nation that possesses numerous nuclear warheads, has bombed and occupied not only Palestine but Lebanon, Syria and parts of Egypt, and has destabilized an entire region.

Israel is also a nation that supported apartheid South Africa with weaponry and political support. Yet, we can both agree that the history of oppression and repression of the peoples of South Africa and the southern Africa region was a great evil.

How can such a thing be right when perpetrated anywhere? I'd like to point you to a statement from South Africa regarding this issue, at www.endtheoccupation.org.za.

I cannot pretend to understand the constraints put upon an artist—the record labels, recording contracts, contractual obligations—so I can't speak to you about the toll the moral stance you are being asked to take would exact from you.

You may lose jobs, face being blackballed, censured, who knows? But did Ray Charles not face the same thing when he refused to play in Georgia? Did the great Paul Robeson not suffer a high cost? Did the boxer Larry Holmes face an unsure future when he refused to fight in South Africa? And, of course, Muhammad Ali refused to fight in Vietnam—for that he lost his belt.

The history of the great majority of people around the world, who create all wealth and who struggle to get by, holds a different set of truths. This history will remember and embrace you tighter than a dear love.

The people of Palestine, of Iraq, Africa, Haiti, the world over will remember you and you can set a precedent, similar to that of Kanye West when he broke script to speak about the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina. Don't go. Your refusal will open new doors.

As the appeal from the British Committee for Universities of Palestine asks, "How can you, in all conscience, play Sonny Rollins' 'Freedom Suite' in Tel Aviv?" Don't go, brother.

—Larry Hales

Rainbow Solidarity

In Defense of CUBA

This soon-to-be published work, a compilation of 25 articles from the Lavender & Red series in Workers World newspaper, shows how the Cuban Revolution has worked to overturn prejudice against same-sex love inherited from the colonial and imperial eras. The book shows the Cuban Revolution's trajectory of progress in hard facts. It's a must-read to understand the revolutionary process required to uproot prejudice.

While the labor to edit, design, lay out and proofread the book is voluntary, printing costs are high. Your financial help is needed to make this happen! Donors should specify how they would like to be listed in Acknowledgments. Write checks to World View Forum; put "Rainbow Solidarity" in the memo line.

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Truth Commission reveals history of Korean War

U.S.-South Korea carried out massacres of civilians

By Eric Struch

As told by most history textbooks in the U.S., the Korean War started with a June 25, 1950, invasion from the communist north and the freedom-loving U.S. came to the aid of the besieged democratic Republic of Korea in the south. The reality was very different.

Not only did the RoK’s dictatorial, fascist-like regime of U.S. puppet Syngman Rhee make the first move, it had prepared for it for more than a year in advance. These preparations included using paramilitary fascist organizations and the regular army for cross-border raids on northern villages to test the defenses of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Domestically, the preparation meant carrying out large-scale executions of suspected communists, leftists and anyone who opposed the neo-colonial rule of the U.S. in the south. The majority of these massacres took place throughout the summer of 1950, but thousands of civilians were executed by RoK military and police throughout the war.

The U.S. military—which had operational command of the RoK army—not only was aware of the massacres, but assisted and even directed many of the executions.

That these massacres had occurred was common knowledge among people both north and south. Due to the repressive anti-communist National Security Law, which threatened penalties of decades in prison, no one in the south dared to speak up until recently.

A half century of official silence finally began to end after the hard struggle of the pro-democracy movement in the 1980s created a political space. Even those who fled to the U.S. to escape the repression couldn’t speak up. They were dependent on established Korean-Americans for jobs, housing and loans, and these privileged elements often had ties to the right-wing Grand National Party or the Korean Central Intelligence Agency.

One voice through the decades spoke the truth to the world about the mass murders. The press in the DPRK constantly tried to bring these crimes to the attention of the world. Because Washington’s racist anti-DPRK propaganda was all-pervasive, the truth never gained any traction in the corporate mass media around the world.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Today in the RoK, a government-funded Truth and Reconciliation Commission headed by Ahn Byung-ook is investigating 1,200 incidents of mass executions in addition to 215 cases in which the U.S. military was directly involved in the executions. Of the more than 150 mass graves unearthed so far, the commission has the physical evidence, documentation and eyewitnesses to officially confirm two mass executions at Ulsan and Cheongwon.

The RoK government now acknowledges that its military, national police and fascist paramilitaries killed over 100,000 civilians at that time, when Korea’s population was 20 million. Kim Dong-choon of the TRC called these government estimates of the human cost of this bloody anti-communist paroxysm “very conservative.”

The numbers may be as high as 200,000 people, with some sources putting it as high as 300,000. These numbers do not even include the extra-judicial executions during the war of those RoK puppet troops deemed to be sympathetic to the liberation forces from the DPRK.

Rightist ideologues, both in Seoul and Washington, point to alleged massacres carried out by the Korean People’s Army, while denying that the actual proven murders perpetrated by the southern puppet forces even took place. In reality, according to a CIA study dated July 19, 1950, cited by Korea scholar Bruce Cumings, during the occupation of the south by the KPA “North Korean officials ran a tight ship but without a lot of bloodshed.”

In another CIA report from 1950, a “large percentage” of trade unionists and union leaders joined the KPA only 10 days into the war. DPRK President Kim Il Sung had given a radio address calling on people in the RoK to organize themselves. People’s Committees were formed and went about seizing Japanese and RoK government property as well as that of the rich.

KPA units in the south distributed rice to the people and emptied the jails of political prisoners, who then turned on the cops and the fascist youth groups. KPA troops, in alliance with the poor peasantry, carried out democratic land reform as they swept southwards. Even in the chaos of war, the KPA maintained its discipline. Cumings says that “captured North Korean documents continued to show that high-level officials warned against executing people.”

The same cannot be said of the RoK puppet forces. Before the war even began, the RoK government created the National Guidance League, a fascist-inspired “re-education” corps for people the Rhee dictatorship claimed were communists. By

1950, more than 300,000 people were forced to join the League.

Kim Dong-choon says the police or the military executed many of the League’s forced inductees. National Police under Korean Military Advisory Group supervision executed 7,000 people in Yangwol (near Taejon) from July 2-6, 1950.

U.S. oversaw exterminations

Alan Winnington of the British Daily Worker in an article entitled “U.S. Belsen in Korea” reported that 20 witnesses observed that truckloads of cops arrived on July 2 and immediately made people dig six pits of about 200 yards each. Executions went on for three days, by both machinegun and, when the bullets ran out, decapitation by sword. According to eyewitnesses, U.S. officers oversaw everything while sitting in their Jeeps. The U.S. Embassy in London then had the chutzpah to call Winnington’s findings a “fabrication.”

The U.S. military, through its operational command over the RoK army, was involved at the highest level in the executions. New York Times correspondent Charles Grutzner talked about “the slaughter of hundreds of South Korean civilians, women as well as men, by some U.S. troops and police of the Republic.”

Keyes Beech, in a July 23, 1950, Newark Star-Ledger article wrote: “It is not the time to be a Korean, for the Yankees are shooting them all.”

Donald Nichols, a former Air Force intelligence officer, wrote in his 1981 memoir of witnessing an “unforgettable massacre” of “approximately 1,800” at Suwon during the war.

In addition, an investigation made by RoK lawmaker Park Chan-hyun in 1960 during the (relatively) democratic interlude of Chang Myon’s Second Republic

revealed that an estimated 10,000 people were executed in Busan.

RoK dictatorship was shaky

What these horrible, inhuman atrocities reveal is that the puppet RoK dictatorship knew its power rested upon a profoundly shaky foundation. As another quite frank CIA report cited by Cumings noted, the rightist RoK leadership “is provided by that numerically small class which virtually monopolizes the native wealth and education of the country.... Since this class could not have acquired and maintained its favored position under Japanese rule without a certain minimum of ‘collaboration,’ it has experienced difficulty in finding acceptable candidates for political office and has been forced to support imported expatriate politicians such as Rhee Syngman and Kim Koo. These, while they have no pro-Japanese taint, are essentially demagogues bent on autocratic rule.”

Rhee’s venal clique knew that his planned drive north depended upon drowning the patriotic and communist elements in the south in blood. Pockets of communist guerrillas who had fought the Japanese occupation were still active in the south as late as 1950.

According to KMAG commander Gen. W.L. Roberts, the RoK puppet army killed 6,000 communist guerrillas from November 1949 to March 1950. Of the attacks on northern border villages carried out by the army and the fascist Northwest Youth paramilitaries that took pace in 1949, Gen. Roberts said that “each was in our opinion brought on by the presence of a small South Korean salient north of the (38th) parallel.... The South Koreans wish to invade the North.”

Despite the staggering scale of the mass murders carried out by the Rhee puppet regime, patriotic feeling still ran so deep among the Korean people that even in the RoK National Assembly, 48 members declared their allegiance to the DPRK at the end of July 1950.

The issue of the mass execution of civilians still divides those who are subservient to U.S. neo-colonialism and those who want an independent Korea. Former RoK president Roh Moo-hyun apologized in an official capacity for the 870 confirmed murders at Ulsan, calling them “illegal acts.” In stark contrast, current president Lee Myung-bak, already deeply unpopular, has threatened to cut funding for the TRC.

Seven years ago, the U.S. government finally admitted part of its own guilt, that its soldiers had killed hundreds of innocent civilians in the South Korean township of Nogun-ri shortly after the start of the Korean War in 1950. President Bill Clinton himself expressed “deep regret” in a public statement on Jan. 11, 2001. □

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Bipartisan wiretap bill passes House

By Caleb Maupin

Left-leaning pundits, such as those on Air America Radio and MSNBC’s Keith Olbermann, call for support of the Democrats on the basis of “defending our civil liberties.” Olbermann, Democratic senators John Kerry and Barack Obama, and Air America commentators have all ridiculed the Bush administration for expanding the police state through wiretaps, illegal detentions, torture and extraordinary rendition.

However, a bill was recently passed by the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives which made the wiretapping of all private phones legal. Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi defended the bill, saying it was needed to protect U.S. citizens from terrorism, her rhetoric not unlike that of President Bush himself.

Not only the rightist Republicans, but many Democrats, the so-called opposition, voted in favor of this bill, which gives the Bush administration permission to listen in on the phone conversations of individuals without a warrant.

This is nothing new for the Democratic Party. COINTELPRO started under

Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956, then continued under the Democratic administrations of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. The FBI illegally tapped thousands of phones, organized break-ins and even set up leaders of the Black Panther Party to be killed as well as harassing socialist and communist groups and leaders.

The Democrats wrap their rhetoric in the blanket of the U.S. Constitution, but they have done nothing to stop the raids and harassment of the immigrant community by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, even though the Constitution makes it clear that all persons are subject to due process of law.

The definition of “persons,” according to the ruling class politicians of the Democratic and Republican parties, has never been very inclusive. The very document which these Democrats wrap themselves in defined Black people as three-fifths of a human being when it was written.

It seems that if the U.S. populace wants to protect itself from the force of state repression, the Democratic Party is not where they should be placing their hopes. □

WW
Commentary

Desde la celda de los condenados habla Mumia Abu-Jamal:

¿Es nuestra la victoria de Obama?

Con la obtención de los delegados requeridos para reclamar la nominación para la presidencia por el Partido Demócrata, el Senador Barack H. Obama (D-IL) ha escrito una nueva página en la historia americana.

Porque al hacer esto tuvo éxito donde Channing Phillips, Shirley Chisholm, Jesse Jackson Sr. y Al Sharpton no tuvieron—lograr el número suficiente de delegados para exigir la nominación.

Por supuesto que ha habido vari@s candidat@s a la presidencia de raza negra, pero han sido esfuerzos de partidos terceros diseñados para levantar conciencia sobre varias cuestiones, para organizar o protestar más que para ganar realmente las elecciones. Algunos de los más conocidos han sido Eldridge Cleaver, (ex-Ministro de Información de la organización Panteras Negras), Dick Gregory, Dra. Lenora Fulani y la ex congresista Cynthia McKinney.

Pero esto es algo muy diferente ya que la candidatura de Obama es la que está más cerca de llegar a la meta.

Lo que también distingue a Obama de sus antecesores es que él no surgió de los movimientos por los derechos civiles, la liberación negra, socialistas o anti guerra. (Él a menudo dice en sus discursos, “Yo no estoy en contra de todas las guerras, estoy en contra de las guerras tontas.”)

Y aunque sus detractores pueden tratar de pintarlo como un liberal de izquierda, esto no es precisamente cierto. En cuestiones tanto del extranjero como domésticas él estaría más cómodo en el Partido Republicano de su antecesor Edward Brooke de Massachusetts. Porque aunque él es de la raza negra por condición de su padre africano, cuidadosamente ha evadido los grupos políticos negros en su larga carrera hacia la Casa Blanca.

Él cuidadosamente ha evadido las demandas reales e históricas de la América Negra. De hecho, él trató de conducir una campaña “pos-racial” hasta que la Senadora Hillary R. Clinton (D-NY) y su esposo, el ex Presidente Bill, trajeron a colación la raza durante las primarias de febrero, tratando de encasillar su candidatura llamándole el “candidato negro.”

Esta primaria lastimó a Obama y mientras ganó delegados, perdió varios estados, como Ohio y Pennsylvania, que son necesarios para una victoria en noviembre. La política es el arte de hacer creer a la gente que tienen el poder, cuando en realidad no tienen ninguno.

Es la medida que dice cuan grave es la situación cuando ellos le han dado las llaves del reino a un hombre negro.

Como en muchas ciudades estadounidenses, se eligieron alcaldes de raza negra cuando las arcas estaban casi vacías y las bases de impuestos estaban casi tocando el fondo.

Con la base manufacturera de la nación algo que ya es historia, en medio de la ruina socioeconómica producto de la globalización y con los asuntos extranjeros en un estado de caos, la clase dominante busca un rostro lindo moreno para representar al imperio.

“El cambio de verdad en el que se puede creer” sería un fin al imperio, un fin a las guerras de avaricia corporativa, no simplemente un cambio en la tez de los gerentes políticos.

Ese cambio, me temo, está todavía por llegar. □



Rivalidad imperialista impulsa conflicto en el Oeste de África

Por G. Dunkel

Una rebelión brotó en Mali y en Níger en febrero de 2007. Los intereses franceses apoyan la rebelión y el gobierno de EEUU apoya los gobiernos actuales.

Con los intereses franceses y estadounidenses maniobrando para tener el control de los recursos importantes de estos países desesperadamente pobres, es mucho más probable que la táctica favorita de los imperialistas de “dividir para conquistar” conduzca a una violencia armada como método para resolver los intereses legítimos de los distintos grupos en la población involucrada.

Níger y Mali son dos de los países más pobres del mundo. Níger está en el lugar 174 de los 177 países en el índice de desarrollo humano de la ONU, mientras que Mali está en el lugar 173. Este índice, que combina varios factores, por ejemplo la tasa de alfabetismo, mortandad infantil, consumo calórico, etcétera, es usado con frecuencia para comparar el nivel de vida.

EEUU intensifica la intervención

Níger y Mali, junto a Senegal, Mauritania, Guinea, Costa de Marfil, Benín, Burkina Faso y Togo eran parte del imperio colonial francés en África Occidental, y se hicieron independientes formalmente en los años 70. El imperialismo francés todavía mantiene una presencia neocolonial fuerte en ellos, con algunas excepciones como Guinea, pero el papel de Francia está siendo desafiado ahora por el imperialismo estadounidense con su nuevo comando AFRICOM.

Desde 1997, el Pentágono ha ejecutado abiertamente una serie de ejercicios militares extensos cada dos años, denominados Operación ‘Flintlock’, con ejércitos de países del África Occidental en el norte de Mali. Mali, Níger, y Senegal, junto con Nigeria, usual-

mente han participado. (Le Monde Diplomatique, julio 2004)

En septiembre de 2007, según la Agencia de Prensa Francesa, un avión de la Fuerza Aérea de los EEUU que llevaba suministros a una unidad del ejército de Mali operando cerca de Tinzaouatène en el norte de Mali fue blanco de disparos. Pudo cumplir su misión y regresó a la base.

Mali es tan pobre que un reporte de la UNICEF del 5 de junio afirmó que 300.000 niños sufren de desnutrición. En Níger, la Organización para Alimentos y Agricultura de la ONU reportó en 2005 que 3,5 millones de personas de una población de 12 millones sufrían de desnutrición después de años de sequía y una plaga severa de saltamontes. Las condiciones en general de Níger no han mejorado mucho, pero la ayuda alimenticia de urgencia disminuyó la amenaza de una hambruna generalizada.

Níger gozó de un período de prosperidad repentina en los años 70 porque tiene la mayor parte de las reservas mundiales de uranio, y el uso de energía nuclear estaba empezando en esa época. En los años 80 y 90, cuando varios países desarrollaron técnicas para usar materia fisionable de bombas desarticuladas y la energía nuclear ya no estaba siendo activamente desarrollada, los ingresos de Níger por minar uranio cayeron de modo drástico.

La crisis de energía es motivo del conflicto

Pero cuando la crisis de energía surgió y, según la Asociación Mundial de Energía Nuclear, países como Rusia, India, Japón y China anunciaron sus intenciones de construir 93 reactores nucleares además de los 34 ya bajo construcción, el precio del uranio ha subido desmesuradamente.

Níger abrió zonas extensas en las regiones del norte del país para nuevas minas. Parece que hay grandes

yacimientos de uranio en Mali cerca de algunos de los yacimientos en Níger, pero todavía no están en producción.

Níger también le cedió algunas concesiones mineras a compañías chinas y las exhortó a buscar petróleo, el cual parece que han encontrado en cantidades significativas.

Como resultado de estas concesiones dadas a las compañías mineras muchas de las 300,000 personas que viven en el norte de Níger — mayormente aunque no exclusivamente del grupo étnico tuareg — están siendo expulsadas de sus viviendas. Son tribus nómadas en una región muy adentro del desierto de Sahara. Aunque cultivan algunos alimentos en oasis aislados, consiguen la mayor parte de sus ingresos al vender sal, y también carne y pieles de su ganado.

A la gente del norte de Níger se les había prometido una porción significativa de la riqueza que esta nueva actividad económica estaba produciendo en su tierra, pero parece que muy poco de los ingresos generados fue distribuido, por los menos no en el norte.

No está claro cuál fue el rol preciso que las compañías energéticas con base en Francia jugaron en el estallido de la rebelión, la cual se esparció rápidamente al norte de Mali donde la gente está en circunstancias semejantes. Las compañías sí tuvieron un papel significativo en sostener el conflicto. Está claro el motivo de estas compañías — querían que Níger eliminara a sus competidores chinos.

Uno de los oficiales del ejército de Níger que se fue al lado de los rebeldes recibió 85,000 euros para proveer seguridad a Cogema, la enorme compañía francesa de energía. (Le Monde Diplomatique, junio 2008) El Coronel Gilles de Namur, jefe de seguridad para Cogema, y Dominique Pin, presidente local del grupo, fueron expulsados de Níger en junio y julio 2007 por el apoyo que dieron a la rebelión. □



La marcha de Orgullo Lesbiano/Gay/Bisexual/Trans en Boston presenció a partidari@s de los Cinco Héroes Cubanos trayendo su mensaje a Massachusetts.